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AN OUTSTANDING CAREER: PROFESSOR EMERITUS IACOB CĂTOIU

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Oprică

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Through the duration of his commissions of Deputy Dean (1981-1989) and, respectively, Dean (1992-2003), and also by the manner of approaching the managerial problems and his scientific extension, Professor Iacob Cătoiu left and indelible trace on the evolution of the former Department of Commerce in the Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE) – now the Department of Business and Tourism. He is author or co-author of an important number of books (57) and articles (105) and book presentations. Thus, after he made the personal acquaintance with Philip Kotler, the guru of international marketing, in 1997, Professor Iacob Cătoiu wrote the Forward to the Romanian version of Philip Kotler's volume Managementul marketingului (Marketing Management) a fundamental book in its field. (Nicolae Lupu)

Professor Emeritus Iacob Cătoiu has lived his life to tell, as Alexandru Tașnadi paraphrases Gabriel Garcia Márquez. Iacob Cătoiu was born and brought up in an enchanting and also historical realm of the Sibiu Outskirts, at *Bocca del Rio (The River Mouth)*, sung by Lucian Blaga: *Country of hills / village beneath the moon / Bocca del Rio / I cannot glean.*

With a childhood full of fine feelings, brought up in the ancient traditions of the environment, he left the native place to study, first at the „Gheorghe Lazăr National College” in Sibiu and then to the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. Breaking with the childlike horizon was not easy to bear and it lingered all his life by the nostalgia for his birth place and the need to stick to it be it only by communication. Education got in his family has had reverberations in his further behavior: common sense, kindness, politeness, stamina, gratitude.

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In the academic milieu, he has managed to keep himself in the top of the rating and in 1996 graduated the Department of Commerce of the ASE with a major in the Economy of the Foreign Trade, as the head of the year graduates. As it was the rule, he started his academic career in the Trade Chair, first as a tutor and then as an assistant professor. His life was not at all easy in that period, when it is well known that the undergraduates should have been accompanied by professors during their practical (mostly agricultural) stages and to be responsible for all their social and managerial issues.

From the above mentioned times, Professor Iacob Cătoiu recalls in his memorial book *Viața ca o clipă. Repere autobiografice* (*Life as a glimpse. Autobiographical landmarks*) published by the ASE Publishing House in 2014, mostly all the people: colleagues, school mates, teachers, friends with whom he has shared both joys and sorrows. With an utmost piety, he has praised words both for professors (Constantin Florescu – the only in the teaching staff with the rank of Full Professor) and for the Assistant Professor (Mihai Grigorescu – the head of the 1962 graduates with the red diploma, meaning passing all the examinations with the 10 [maximum] grade). In fact, Iacob Cătoiu had met the assistant professor Mihai Grigorescu and became acquainted with him when the latter was still an undergraduate in the 5th (final) year on the occasion of a May Day Parade.

Iacob Cătoiu was not a bookworm (or library mouse as we say in Romanian) but had multiple interests: he joined the folk dance team at the Student's Culture House/ Club and had a steady interest to go to the theatres, cinemas and, fairly seldom, to the opera house. With a great freshness of memory he recalls the names of tens of actors, actresses, singers and other superstars of the Romanian theatre whom, he confesses, he had the chance to see them alive.

Coming to Bucharest was fruitful for the Transylvanian Iacob. He met his life partner in the person of „Lady Angela”, as she calls her with great consideration, whom he married with for the whole life and had two daughters as well as a grandson Dănuț, whom he cares most.

After a contest, with appeals from those who thought themselves entitled to study in the United States, the right prevailed for the applicant Iacob Cătoiu. But the hardships had just started. Bureaucracy was almighty. To get a passport and visas were an issue „hard to put in words” and unbelievable today, when only those who do not care could not have a passport at hand. Indiana University – United States allowed a Romanian to enter the studies but it took one more semester to reach the campus all due to this bureaucracy. The author reveals in this book all the troubles of air transport to the final destination.



*The cover of the autobiographical volume *Viața ca o clipă* (Life as a glimpse) published in the collection „Professor of ASE. Affective Experiences” (487 pages). „To the Readers, a grain of love” is the title of the Foreword signed by Prof. Al Taşnadi*

Thus starts the American odyssey starts for getting the first PhD in Marketing for a citizen of Romania. The author gives details about the way you enroll into an American university, the path available even today. Due to his personal gifts, the new postgraduate student from Romania could impress the audience by participating to the sports contest – the soccer team of the University – and the magnificent demonstrations of the Romanian Folkdances, which Iacob Cătoiu had mastered since childhood. And then the Pan's pipe, which he had never parted from. The sacrifices endured along the five years of studying for the MA and PhD paid overwhelmingly the diplomas that gave him the right to assume the highest level in the university hierarchy. But not straight away and with stumbling blocks and, probably, envies. During the five years of study at the University in Bloomington and then on the occasion of a prolonged visit in the US, he could travel across most of the marvels in the New World. The stage of five years was accomplished in four years and a half due to the „infernal” effort made by the PhD candidate and doing so to fulfil the task of the communist „Five-Year Plan in four years and a half”, as the author humorously declares.

Meeting guests from Romania, very seldom at that time, were occasions of great enjoyment: the members of the Romanian Academy Dimitrie Macrea and Gheorghe Ivănescu on their way to a Congress of Romanic linguistics in Montreal, Constantin Eretescu from the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore in Bucharest, Ilinca Constantinescu from the University of Bucharest, Professor Cicerone Poghirc and his wife who had decided then not to return to the Communist Romania (!), and some occasional visits of Fulbright stipend students and invited lecturers.

Homecoming to ASE did not lead, as it had been expected, to a promotion and Iacob Cătoiu, with a PhD magna-cum-laude from Indiana University, waited two years for a contest of university lecturer, a title „preserved” thirteen years and who knows what might have happened if the change of December 1989 had not occurred. Surely, the titles received from the „capitalist” universities were not so well considered by the communist nomenclature. Together with the long awaited changes in the higher education, too, the hero of Bloomington stepped on a natural path and after three years of „associate professor” he finally got the deserved status of „full professor”. Responsibilities thus accumulated to a similar degree and – after the position of Vice dean, for about 8 years (1981-1989) – he was elected Dean of the Department of Commerce, for 11 years (1992-2003).

The most important achievement in the Academy was the Department of Marketing, initiated by Professor Iacob Cătoiu, which supplemented then in 2003 the nine existing Departments with a solid prestige. Within several years, the Department got a considerable recognition, being the only one in the Romanian higher education, offering a wide range training, highly demanded in the Romanian economy „and not only” (as we say, taking into account that many graduates praise this trade in several countries with a long tradition).

The courses taught by Professor Iacob Cătoiu cover, in an inventory, nearly two pages in the above mentioned monograph (pp. 458-459).

Teaching courses in English: Marketing, International Marketing, Strategic Marketing to the Departments of ASE follows naturally a course in Marketing taught at the Indiana University during his doctorate stage, as a token of competency for a student coming from beyond „the iron curtain”, where certain values were growing, especially by individual efforts.

In spite of all these outstanding outlets towards the fields of marketing (methods of market studies, industrial marketing, marketing research, public relations, customers' behavior, patterns of marketing, tourist marketing, financial-banking marketing, quantitative research etc.) our Emeritus Professor of today still regrets that he has not taught a course in cyber-marketing, but he hasn't lost hopes to teach one in the next few years, as he is in demand in the spirit of his age with a prefix seven (in other words, he is in the early 70s).

Guiding the PhD dissertations in universities intitled to organize Doctorate Schools and Marketing specialization, both state and private, challenges him utmost but it gives a full satisfaction when these „doctors” are asked anywhere who had been the supervisor of their doctoral dissertation. The quality is assured, as it is of an international standard received at the most well known American Universities (Indiana at Bloomington and Northwestern University at Chicago). The full international approval and recognition have come from the visit to Romania of the most famous marketing figure in the world, Philip Kotler, on the occasion of issuing the Romanian translation of the treatise *Marketing Management* at the Parliament Palace.

Taking into account a number of 46 PhD dissertations concluded up to 2014, we can realize the subject extension as well as the geographical spread of the beneficiaries. From the banking marketing to medical, ecological and religious marketing, with two dissertations about the expansion of marketing on the Romanian territory and also in Iraq, Egipt, Bolivia and the Republic of Moldova.



Comportamentul consumatorului (The Consumer's Behavior) by Iacob Cătoi și Nicolae Teodorescu, whose first printing was published in 2003 in the collection „Library of Marketing” of the Uranus Publishing House (Director Dumitru Ionciță)

The publications of Professor Iacob Cătoi cannot be wholly quoted and less read by those who would like to have a comprehensive view on this titan of the exploratory field. Try to enter the website „Professor Emeritus Iacob Cătoi” and you will find 138 entries, enough for several weeks of information and consequent satisfaction for what you have found out.

Post-doctoral titles and distinctions of his Excellency start with diplomas of Doctor Honoris Causa of the „1st of December” University – Alba Iulia (2004) and „Lucian Blaga” – Sibiu (2012), then the medal „Merit of Education” in the rank of Commander (2004), the diplomas „Georgescu-Roegen” of the University of Economic Studies (2005 and 2012), the



„We cannot think of a business without marketing and marketing without research” and no research without the Treatise coordinated by Prof. Iacob Cătoi, published in „Library of Marketing” 2009

Diploma of Excellence „Forty years of university education in marketing” (2011), Diploma for the „Man of the Value” from the Master programs (2013), Laudation of the 2007 Marketing graduates, the Diploma of Professor Emeritus (2011) with the appropriate certificate, the Diploma of Excellence of the Romanian Association of Marketing – AROMAR (2001) and more recently the Diploma of the University merit „Virgil Madgearu” (2013).

In the memories published in the above mentioned volume *Viața ca o clipă*, the author mentions and sometimes introduces a number of about one thousand personalities and people acquainted with along his life and who enjoyed at least one meeting, if not having a determined contribution to the author's destiny. In this respect the first rank should be attributed to his wife Lady Angela, who has accompanied him < for better and for worse>, especially under difficult circumstances along the fifty years of living together, and the two daughters (graduates of medicine and economic respectively) and the grandson Dan Iacob, on the verge of maturity.



*In the Magna Aula of ASE, on the 5th of May 2015, immediately after the marathon-conference of launching the volume *Viața ca o clipă* the author and Lady Angela, surround by friends and co-workers*

From the relatives and „village sons” of Gura Râului whom the author praises with words of admiration and homage, through the professors he attended in Romania and especially those by whom he accomplished his career in the United States, to his colleagues and friends in ASE, each of them enjoys a large gratitude, against the saying that „gratitude is a rare flower” and he gives each and everyone an outstanding concern.

His social activities capacitated a large amount of time and energy of our Professor and we wonder how he managed to cover everything. The link of native realm has been kept permanently as a strong root from which the author's entire intellectual and managerial abilities have developed. By the endeavor of this outstanding son of the village, the school in Gura Râului had been endowed with teaching aids at a time when computers and overhead projectors had been a luxury. Then a „Jacob Cătoiu” prize was settled for the best schoolchildren in Mărginimea Sibiului (The Outskirts of Sibiu) starting with the 1999-2000 schoolyear. Even if he has not a business of his own, the Professor sponsored cultural activities as „The Mountain Peony” or „Wear the national costume” organized at Gura Râului. The church of the village enjoys a similar consideration as the school, they being the supporting pillars of the century old community. A Summer Shrine of the „Saint Venerable Paraschiva” church, to which our tribune contributed, was inaugurated in 2010 with the attendance of the ecclesiastical authorities in the Transylvania Metropolitan Church.



In 2009, at the Summer Economics University organized by the former Chair of Tourism-Services at Sibiu, explaining the peculiarities of the folk costumes in the ethno-folk area of Mărginimea Sibiului (The Outskirts of Sibiu); Prof. Iacob Cătoiu is a lover of the Transylvania folk poetry

As appreciation, Laurențiu Streza, PhD, the Archbishop of Sibiu and the Metropolitan Bishop of Transylvania, granted Professor Honoris Causa Iacob Cătoiu an „Act of Honour” „on the occasion of the blessing of the renovation works of the holy place... to be an impetus to a greater Christian ardour”. The crucifix „The Veil of God's Mother” erected by the Professor's family in 2009, guards the main entrance to the village.

Both the Local Council of Gura Râului and the Sibiu County Council granted Iacob Cătoiu the diplomas of Honoured Citizen of the Village and respectively the the Honoured Citizen of the Sibiu County for „the distinguished contribution to the reputation of the County”.

If you want to meet Professor when he is teaching in the Academy, you will find a Skoda car with the CIA (acronym of Cătoiu Iacob and Angela) on the plate parked outside de Eminescu building and on the 4th floor (Room 1401) he is waiting friendly to greet you and to share his tremendous life experience.

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** Prof. Octavian Oprică is the graduate of the University of Bucharest, Department of English-Romanian in 1966. He has studied for his PhD but did not conclude his dissertation in Psycholinguistics and later in Marketing. At the beginning of his career, for about five years he worked in tourism at the Black Sea Litoral (mostly in summer) covering a diverse range of jobs from lift-boy to the chief in a Hotel complex in Mamaia including Seaside Tours as an English-speaking guide. Denying a proposition to be permanently employed at the National Tourist Office, he devoted his entire professional life to teaching foreign languages (English, French, Russian) and Romanian at the preuniversity level and since 1993 at the Academy of Economic Sciences. As an irony of fate, at the beginning of his teaching career, wishing to master the English language, Prof. Iacob Cătoiu registered to the services of the People's University in Bucharest, where Prof. Octavian Oprică was teaching evening classes. A happy encounter! Prof. Iacob Cătoiu remembers: I „have rarely had the chance to meet a professor more dedicated to his duty, more close to the students, of a kind-hearted behavior, always seeking the latest developments in the field, full of enthusiasm and energy”. And further, Prof. Iacob Cătoiu continues in his Viața ca o clipă: „I had not envisaged that, after many years, he would join the teaching staff of our Academy, would attend my courses in the view of best acquiring the concepts and vocabulary specific to a new and complex field of study – marketing”. Further on, during some stages in his career, Prof. Octavian Oprică worked as a research worker in Education, and for a brief period of time as a chief inspector in the Ministry of Education. He is fully devoted to history and art and also to traveling (over the Ocean several times and inside and out of Romania in Europe). He has a voluntary, searching, dynamic (even sporting) temper, promoting personalities in all circumstances. In the volume The History of Modern Languages in the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. A Centennial Perspective (editors: Mariana Nicolae and Mara Magda Maftai) he is the coauthor of the chapter on the English language. His latest project is the posting cell of the martyrs (economists and economics professors) who were imprisoned and some died in the Sighet Jail, now consecrated as a memorial to those who did not believe in, and fought against communism.*